



Representative Chris Tuck

Alaska House Majority Coalition Leader

Serving House District 23 • Dimond Estates, Foxridge, Taku, Campbell, Northwood, and Windemere

Sponsor Statement

House Joint Resolution 33:

HJR 33 sends the message to the Alaska Congressional Delegation that our great state is at the forefront of a rapidly evolving Arctic region. As the only Arctic state in the Union, it will be Alaska's responsibility to ensure that the country's interests are protected along its northernmost flank.

Increased navigability in the Arctic Ocean has opened new trade routes, shortening the distance of intercontinental trips by nearly 5,000 miles. In a four-year span the Coast Guard tracked a 100% increase in Arctic traffic. The potential economic advantages of controlling these routes have caused disputes over freedom of navigation with our Arctic neighbors Russia and Canada. The growing influx of vessels into the Arctic Ocean poses a danger in emergencies, with the nearest rescue ships and helicopters more than seven hundred miles away.

Recognizing the opportunities that lie in the region, the Russian Federation established the Arctic Joint Strategic Command to assert itself in the region. China, a non-Arctic nation, has begun to express its interests in the Arctic as well, developing a vessel with icebreaking capabilities and becoming a permanent observer in the Arctic Council.

The United States has yet to fully embrace its role as an Arctic nation and the responsibilities that come along with it. This is likely to remain the case until a major event—an oil spill, a security breach, or a stranded cruise ship—focuses national attention on Alaska and the lack of infrastructure that exists in the Arctic region. Waiting for a calamity to occur before taking action on Arctic issues is a misguided means of conducting policy, especially due to the fact that the extreme weather of the region will slow large infrastructural projects. Early investment into the region is the only way to ensure that the US does not fall behind in the Arctic region.

HJR 33 urges Congress to take action and direct funds to our state in order to position Alaska as a leader within the increasingly active and contentious Arctic region. HJR 33 serves as a continuing reminder to Congress that the US is an Arctic nation and therefore has certain responsibilities in the region. I humbly ask for your support for this resolution.

Session (January-April):
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